

ETA MATTERS

Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor

HAMMER TIME! for "SAFETY NET"

AWARD-WINNING VIRTUAL CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE CENTER A SUCCESS

Analysts do it. Planners do it. Engineers and program specialists throughout government do it. In fact, nearly 30,000 people each month in the U.S. and throughout the world do it... online. They access career transition assistance services through *Safety Net*, one of the most powerful tools ever designed to help federal employees threatened by downsizing find the help they need to plan their post-Federal careers. It's a *Hammer Award*-winning program that's the first of its kind in the public sector.

What's in it for you? Just about everything you can imagine, and more. User-friendly guidance to employment resources, including

advice on resumes, cover letters, networking, interviewing and using headhunters. Tips to help if you've thought about going back to school, or starting a business. Information on relocating, cost-of-living comparisons, job market research and professional societies.

Hundreds of thousands of job opportunities in private industry, and state and local government. Extensive information on reductions-in-force; buyouts; and career transition assistance. For those considering retirement, there is information about annuities, elder law, financial planning, tax issues and information on travel and volunteer opportunities. And, links to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), giving users access to federal vacancy announcements, and information about federal employment.

Safety Net's conception was a joint project of the Departments of Labor (under the direction of OMIS' Peter Brunner); Agriculture (Joanne Broderick) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Kathy Cappello). Brunner says the three teamed up as part of a leadership project for the Council for Excellence in Government's Fellows Program. *Safety Net* was publicly introduced

in July 1996 as a homepage on the WWW entitled, "Planning Your Future--A Federal Employee's Survival Guide." Later that year, DOL signed a memorandum of understanding with OPM, recognizing *Safety Net's* role in government-wide efforts to ameliorate the impact of downsizing in the federal sector and commits the agencies to coordinate their transition assistance efforts. DOL maintains the site; OPM provides current, relevant information on buyouts, placement and outplacement programs, reductions in force, and more.

There are lots of sites on the Internet focusing on job recruitment and resources; few sites, however, explore the personal issues confronting people whose lives are disrupted by downsizing. Similarly, there are career transition centers through major federal agencies to help affected employees, but most are located in major metropolitan areas, leaving employees in remote areas of the country (and overseas) unserved. *Safety Net* has changed that by creating a "common forum" for sharing ideas on career transition assistance projects on a government-wide basis.

Pete Brunner says an interesting

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byproduct of *Safety Net* is that many of its offerings are presented in a modular format, which can be used in other ETA efforts on the World Wide Web. "Elements of *SafetyNet* have also been used in ETA's Welfare-to-Work page, and in the joint DOL/DOE School-to-Work site," he says.

Hey, don't miss this connection. The address is (<http://SafetyNet.doleta.gov>). If you're ever in the neighborhood, stop on by.

ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS...

A PERSPECTIVE OF PRIDE: DECADES OF PROGRESS IN APPRENTICESHIP

The story of "Rosie the Riveter," the woman with her sleeves rolled up on the cover of a 1943 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post*, belongs to one of this nation's most successful training programs. In case you didn't know, Rosie was a tool and die maker, the symbol of a movement toward non-traditional occupations for women in the years during and just after World War II.

It has been sixty years since Congress passed the Fitzgerald Act, also known as the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937. Former Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins convened the first Federal Committee on Apprenticeship three years earlier, and in the decades that followed, history forged revolutionary changes in workforce

development through the newly-created Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT).

With its roots in Franklin Roosevelt's historic New Deal, the Fitzgerald Act gave official recognition to apprenticeship training as a method for preparing young people for skilled trades. Today, registered apprenticeship programs are operated and financed by employers, employer associations, or jointly by labor and management on a voluntary basis. BAT provides support to program sponsors, in partnership with state apprenticeship agencies; the U.S. Apprenticeship Association, and the National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors.

As the Bureau celebrates six decades of progress for America's workers, there are milestones to note with pride. Traditionally associated with skilled trades, apprenticeship is now available in hundreds of occupations, from jewelers to police officers. Today, there are nearly 400,000 registered apprentices in the U.S., with nearly 83,000 in the armed forces. Nearly one-third of them are people of diverse ethnic backgrounds; 8% are women. There are 837 apprenticeable occupations such as bakers; computer operators; firefighters; painters; plumbers; and of course, tool & die makers. There are training programs that serve women, young people, dislocated workers and others in non-traditional occupations.

There are more than 110 BAT

offices in fifty states throughout the U.S., including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. There are nine "priority teams" convened in partnership throughout the Bureau who tackle issues related to space, technology, expansion, marketing, resources, diversity, program quality and retention and partnership issues. The Senior Leadership Team is a unique partnership of regional and state directors, union and management representatives and national office staff. Together, these team members seek collaborative ways in which to further the expansion of the entire registered apprenticeship system and improve services to customers.

As a model for other programs that seek to prepare workers and position the nation for its global economy, BAT is a proven success. As for the number of women in skilled trades and non-traditional occupations today, it has more than doubled since the days of Big Band swing and zoot suits.

Rosie would have been proud.

THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS

ETA TEAM KIT (Team Tool Kit) *Note: Excerpts from the Team Kit are provided as refreshers to encourage all associates to make use of the concepts and ideas for successful*

teams and group process. We hope you find this information useful and urge you to contact the Reinvention Office for more information or assistance.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of group discussions is to provide participants with an opportunity to review what has been presented, discussed or distributed; express reactions; draw conclusions and find common themes; and summarize, or move toward agreement. Discussion can be creative and productive, both as a way of learning and as a way of making decisions, because it:

- involves more people in the analytical or decision-making process;
- fosters a climate in which decisions reached are more readily accepted;
- draws upon the knowledge and experience of more people;
- permits individual ideas to be considered;
- provides clarification of ideas or information;
- sharpens critical thinking; and
- challenges entrenched ideas

MEETING or GROUP DISCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Effective meetings (or group discussions) just don't happen automatically by getting people together in a room to discuss a topic. Be sure to:

1. Have an agenda;
2. Identify a meeting leader;
3. Have meeting groundrules;
4. Take minutes; and
5. Record key points on flipcharts;

6. Identify a timekeeper;
7. Have a facilitator; and
8. Evaluate the meeting.

PROBLEM-SOLVING TOOLS

There are two kinds of problem-solving tools: those which help generate or prioritize ideas; and those who help analyze them. Ideas may be in the form of problems or solutions, depending on where you are in the problem-solving process.

DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS

A group reaches consensus when all members agree upon a single alternative, and each group member can honestly say: I believe that you understand my point of view and that I understand yours. Whether or not I prefer this decision, I support it because a) it was reached fairly and openly; and b) it was the best solution for us at this time.

To reach consensus:

1. Listen; pay attention to others.
2. Encourage participation.
3. Share information.
4. Don't agree too quickly.
5. Don't bargain or trade support.
6. Treat differences as strengths.
7. Don't vote.
8. Create solutions that can be supported.
9. Avoid arguing blindly for your own views.
10. Seek a "win-win" solution.

GROUP PROCESS

The concept of "group process" is best understood by contrasting it with the "content" of the group's work. One model for problem solving has proven useful and may

help focus on the process for generating and choosing the best solution(s) to the problem solving has proven useful and may help focus on the process for generating and choosing the best solution(s) to the problem. First, identify the problem. Then, select and research the problem. The next step is to generate solutions, then choose the best one. Present, advocate the implement the solution; then evaluate results. (Refer to p.35 for more tools useful in group process for problem solving; and pp. 36-37 for more information on alternative decision-making methods.

Finally, understanding and dealing with group process is important because effective group process leads, progressively, to better relationships, better information-sharing and decision-making; and finally, movement towards the team's content-related goal. If group process is not attended to, "hidden agendas," power struggles, continuing tension and other feelings may surface and can sabotage progress. Participants are more likely the team and/or withdraw their support for any decisions made when group process is forgotten.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS...

A NEW TWIST ON AN OLD INSTITUTION--THE A.M. "COFFEE BREAK"

Go ahead. Feel free to break an old habit... stretch that morning

coffee break into, say, about an hour, and find out more about the world around you. It's a new twist on an old habit, and its taking hold throughout ETA. It's also worth talking about, in case you hadn't considered the merits of this particular mix of communication and training.

What's a Brief & Brunch?

Simply put, it's another way to share information on topics with universal appeal to all associates, regardless of grade level or demographic group. It is designed to foster an environment of continuous learning by facilitating information-sharing on issues of widespread interest to ETA employees.

How Do You Set One Up?

That's simple, too. Set aside one hour (no more), preferably in the morning to minimize conflicts with other activities. People can bring their own refreshments, so be sure to allow sufficient table space and room large enough to facilitate comfort for the audience.

Take ten minutes or so to welcome the audience and the host, explain the concept (of the B&B), introduce the presenters and allow for self-introductions of attendees (if needed). Then for the next 40 minutes or so, the presenter (or subject matter expert) takes responsibility for the topical program, reserving about half of that time for presentation, and half for questions and answers. Conclude (about 5 minutes for this part!) with thanks to the presenters

and the attendees. Ask the audience to complete a brief evaluation form, and announce the next session(s).

What Kinds of Topics are Covered?

Be creative! Sessions held thus far in the regions and in the national office include:

Welfare to Work Regulations
ETA Employee Exchange Program
Work Opportunity Tax Credits
Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
ETA Team Kit
UI Profiling
School-to-Work
The New Global Economy

What's worked well? What are the successes so far?

1. The presenter(s) should understand what the audience expects and might be interested in.
2. Handouts should be suitable for the needs and expectations of the audience.
3. No such thing as too much "internal marketing." Flyers, e-mail messages, word of mouth and the U/M Pair network can all be great in helping to spread the word and encouraging others to attend.
4. A bi-weekly schedule works well. Be careful not to schedule during vacations or busy times.

How Do I Get More Information?

That's easy, too. Check with your regional office (many of the

regions are conducting informational seminars, brown bags and such). Or, contact the Office of Human Resources at (202) 219-6344.

A SAN FRANCISCO TREAT... and some fond memories, too

As is their custom, the EIQI U/M Pairs came together toward the end of last year to discuss issues of importance to the EIQI system. This time, they did it in the "city by the bay" and came away with regional "Action Plans" with short-term, long-term and ongoing commitments tied to the EIQI Charter and ETA goals.

Everyone agreed it was another good meeting, and there were some "hellos" and "thank yous" along the way. New members of the family include: Charlene Giles (M); John Smith and LaWanda Courtney (U, coU) from Dallas; San Francisco's Joe Semansky and Dallas' Susan Howard (Job Corps); Dianne Nino (Denver) and Martha Norman (San Francisco). Very special thank yous and farewells to Felecia Blair from Dallas; Fred Parnter from New York, Paul Nelson from San Francisco, Lisa Demeo from Boston, and Lynn Intrepedi from Philadelphia.

As most of you know, our beloved

Regional Administrator and EIQUI Lead Management representative Bill Hood passed away last month. We will miss him, and are better for having known & worked with him.

The EIQUI U/M Pairs are in the process of establishing an annual award to honor Bill's memory and great contributions to partnership during his tenure in ETA.

The next meeting will be held in Dallas April 7-9.

REGIONAL NEWS

NEW YORK

In the spirit and letter of partnership, Region II recently implemented a Flexiplace policy. Based on regional staff input on the concept, the EIQUI Committee drafted a paper, which was given to all associates for comment. The final product reflects a consensus of all in the region. RA Marilyn Shea and Local President Carl Travato were both pleased with the document. The policy will be reviewed later this year for its effectiveness.

BOSTON

Its creation is a true example of the successes of reinventing work processes by adapting them to changing needs of one's customers. Boston's "Policy and Decisionmaking Team," established as a successor to its

Steering Committee, is making headlines everywhere. Called "the PDM Team," this initiative began two years ago as a step on the journey toward a high-performance organization. And, it was a natural progression for the region, since staff had a wealth of experience in team-based approaches to their work, consensus decision-making, problem solving and brainstorming.

Power and decision-making is shared with all regional staff, and meetings are open to anyone who'd like to come. Items for the agenda, as well as decisions reached at the meetings, are made by consensus.

Over the last year, the PDM Team has taken on a much broader role, with an emphasis on work priorities and decision-making. It is viewed by the region as a major vehicle for involvement in a wide range of issues and concerns, and as such, affords everyone the opportunity to be part of the solution or action plans to address specific items.

Region I's Dick Makela says that the Team has been looking into ways to enhance trust and respect in the office, and says there is benefit to all. "One employee said that the Team meetings are the one place where they can go and express their opinion on any subject, without anyone making judgments..." he said. "All in all, Region I feels that the PDM is a good vehicle for employee input and decision-making that will continue to serve the region well into the future."

ON THE HORIZON...

The Navy Medical Quality Institute, U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Department of Commerce are "teaming up" with ETA to develop a joint, customized training package using the ETA TEAM KIT. The course will be tailored to intact and/or special project teams around process improvement and other issues.

Some of your neighbors in the regions are signing up for "How to Facilitate Groups," designed to help develop new facilitation skills and approaches; or strengthen existing experience and skills. Specifically, the course is geared toward:

- * designing meetings
- * leading group discussions
- * helping groups reach consensus
- * helping groups solve problems
- * helping groups resolve differences
- * evaluating meetings

There is heavy emphasis on *practice*, as the workshop is highly interactive and recommended for anyone who conducts meetings; participates in meetings; or simply wants to enhance their meeting management skills.

But, don't take our word for it. What's been said about it?

"I'll pay more attention to how I prepare for a meeting, my role as a facilitator, and I'll give more detail to group dynamics..."

"I was pleased with the training. It was informative and I really had

fun while learning..."

*"Thank you for a pleasant two
and a half days..."*

Want more information? Looking
for a facilitator for that next
meeting? Call the Reinvention
Office at (202) 219-6955.
You'll be glad you did.

***Produced in partnership with
AFGE's Local 12 and NCFLL;
and ETA management, "ETA
MATTERS" presents its readers
with "behind the scenes"
opportunity to stay abreast of new
developments and share
workplace successes.***

**News to share? Comment?
Contact Lori McConnell at
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